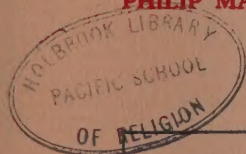


THE FRONTIER

A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

EDITED BY

PHILIP MAIRET AND ALEC VIDLER



JUNE 1952
Vol. III No. 6

THE THEOLOGY OF
THE FRONTIER

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THE FRONTIER

A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE
COMMON LIFE

Vol. III. No. 6.

JUNE 1952

Monthly Letter

OUR editorial remarks this month will be limited to a prefatory note to Principal John Baillie's article on the Theology of the Frontier. This has clearly first claim on your attention, for it provides material of major importance for the understanding of the Frontier outlook.

Of the articles that follow, the first, on Colonial Development, may seem a long way on the worldly side of the Frontier, until one remembers how much of the prospect for Christendom in many distant lands depends upon a faithful discharge of the heavy tasks now devolving upon Britain in the Colonies. But both of the other main contributions are concerned in different ways with the same subject as Principal Baillie—namely, “the question of communication”, the problem of interpreting the Christian faith to the man of the modern world. One of these is a discussion of Publicity, of what is and is not to be expected of the modern instruments of mass information. The other deals with a particular effort to embody theological truth in a form at once poetic and pictorial, T. S. Eliot's adventure into the realm of the cinema.

But the anxieties and outward efforts of Christians to keep contact with the mind of a hostile, indifferent or contemptuous world are also leading them, through painful self-questioning, to a deeper inward understanding of their own

position. That is the theme of Principal Baillie's address. What he has to say of these reactions upon the contemporary Christian mind is attested by quotations from some of the most powerful and saintly thinkers who in recent years have dared to confront the powers of evil alone, in the strength of God and for the love of man. Their words take us to the deepest, because the most personal, ground from which the frontier idea originated.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE FRONTIER

by the

VERY REV. JOHN BAILLIE

WHAT is the frontier of which we here speak? We may be tempted to answer that it is the fence which divides our population into two mutually exclusive classes of Christians and non-Christians; which classes we may go on further to define as the baptized and the unbaptized, or as the elect and the reprobate, or as the regenerate and unregenerate.

However, even when we have in mind our relation as Christians to the mixed company of our neighbours, we do not, I think, conceive the frontier dividing us as a fence, or as a Euclidean line that has length but no thickness. We conceive it rather as a borderland, but not so much a no-man's land as a common land in which we can meet and talk to one another, even if only in some sort of *lingua franca*. Where the frontier is merely a fence, there can only be two parties facing each other in mutual hostility; there can be no real tensions, no dialectical relationship, no fruitful discussion—for all discussion presupposes some extent of common ground, and every argument some premise admitted by both disputants.

So far as I know, our present way of speaking about "the frontier" was first employed by Paul Tillich. In 1936 he

prefaced the English translation of a collection of his essays with an autobiographical sketch of some seventy pages which he called "On the Boundary"; or that is how his translation renders his German phrase *An der Grenze*, which would, I think, be better rendered "On the Frontier". Among many other helpful things he says this:

"In face of paganism there is no such thing as apologetics, but only the struggle for existence and non-existence which prophetic monotheism has always carried on against demonic polytheism."¹

Modern Humanism

That is Tillich's "theology of the frontier", if and when the frontier is conceived as lying between Christianity and paganism; and it means that if there are those in our University communities who are pure pagans, in the authentic as distinct from the modern colloquial sense of the word, no real conversation between them and us is possible. As one of the earliest victims of National Socialist pressure on the German Universities, Tillich no doubt had actual cases in mind. Moreover, we all realize that no good came of trying to talk or to argue with Hitler and Ribbentrop and Goebbels and Rosenberg and their fellow pagans. There was literally *no* borderland, no common ground, lying between us and them. Tillich, however, goes on to say that such a situation is very exceptional within our Western world, since what we normally have to deal with is not paganism but humanism, and humanism is not wholly alien to Christianity as paganism is, but enters as an element into Christianity itself. Furthermore, the humanism of the modern era is a humanism very definitely coloured by, and originally rooted in, Christian ideas, so that the common ground is still more extensive. Tillich writes:

"Decisive for ancient and modern apologetics is the question of a common criterion, a court of judgment where the dispute can be settled. As I searched for this criterion, I discovered that the

¹ *The Interpretation of History*, p. 43.

modern trends of thought which are rooted in the period of the Enlightenment are substantially Christian, in spite of their critical attitude towards ecclesiastical Christianity. They are not pagan, as is often said about them. Paganism, especially in its nationalist garb, did not appear until after the first world war, in connection with the complete disintegration of Christian humanism."¹

There is, therefore, to-day a real borderland within which discussion can have place. Within our own breasts there is a borderland between our faith and our secular interests, and within the community in which we live there is the same borderland between those who are within and those who are without the circle of full Christian commitment. As Tillich says, there was a certain borderland of this kind even for the early Christian apologists within the Roman Empire who found in the philosophy and humanistic culture of the Hellenistic world a measure of common ground with their pagan neighbours such as the traditional paganism of Greece and Rome could not possibly have provided. However, our modern situation is quite different. All the interests that divide our modern attention, and all the varieties of outlook that divide our modern community, have now been with us for two thousand years. During the so-called Ages of Faith, when theology was the queen of the sciences, when the Church was the centre and focus of the whole community life and every man except the Wandering Jew was a member of the Church, every interest of life was developed under Christian influence, and every department of life was regulated by the rule of faith. Much of the ancient classical humanism was indeed taken up into this Christian synthesis, and perhaps something also from the ancient culture of the Northern peoples, but it was all as it were baptized into Christianity and by the end of a thousand years was so transmuted that it is now difficult for us, even with the aid of antiquarian research, to understand the Greek and Roman classics in just the same way as the contemporaries of Cicero or Seneca understood them.

¹ Ibid.

Diffusion and Disintegration

What marks our modern era is the break-up of this Christian synthesis. It has broken up, in the first place, within our own Christian breasts. The story of this development has often been told. It is a tale of one after another of the interests and departments of life gradually elbowing their way to greater freedom from central control, not simply from the control of the institutional Church and of ecclesiastical courts, but also from the direct control of religious faith. More and more has each of these parts of our general Western culture claimed to be master in its own house, no longer drawing the principles of its development from the common centre, but allowing itself to develop according to its own interior laws, and only afterwards facing the problem of its relation to the centre or of whether it can return to the centre at all, bringing its sheaves with it. This is what had happened in turn to our philosophy, our science, our historiography, our politics, our theatre, our music, our painting and other arts, our general literature and our pedagogy, all of which were formerly under the central control of the Church and its faith.

Very intimately connected with this process has been the other respect in which the old pattern of our Western culture has been changed, namely, the break-up of the community itself. Formerly, every citizen was a member of the Christian Church. Though many indeed were not good Christians, and were hardly at all religious, yet each thought of himself as a Christian—and despised the Jew and the Saracen because these were not Christians. In former days our society was Christian in the sense that its standards were Christian; not in the sense that its members conformed to the Christian standards, but in the sense that they did not doubt the authority of these standards. The confusion that marks our society to-day is not due to our population having become more vicious than the generations of its forefathers, but to the fact that considerable sections of it no longer acknowledge the authority of the Christian

standards, whether of faith or of morals. Thus it comes about that for each of us, within the circle of his own acquaintance and fellow workers and professional colleagues, there exists a frontier between the committed Christians and those who either refuse to call themselves Christians or are in doubt whether they still desire to be called by that name.

A Post-Christian Situation

There are, however, two considerations which are of great importance for the theology of this frontier situation. To begin with, it is very definitely a post-Christian situation, fundamentally different from any pre-Christian situation or from any situation that could have existed apart from Christian influence. Every aspect of modern life presupposes Christianity as at least its point of departure. It is an offshoot, however disproportionate or perverse or even bastard in its growth, of some element in the Christian tradition. For instance, even those modern political radicalisms which seem to be most opposed to Christianity are themselves impregnated with Christian ideas. To take another instance, modern science, as its originators were not unaware, is rooted in Christian ideas, however difficult may now be its relation with its foster-parent. Thus there is always a certain amount of ground common to ourselves who are Christians and even those groups of our colleagues who have adopted the points of view that are seemingly most opposed to our own—the points of view, for example, of communism or of scientific positivism or of evolutionary progressivism. I should say the same of atheistic existentialism, as in Heidegger and Sartre. That too is something of a Christian bantling, with a bar sinister no doubt, but nevertheless showing some traces of Christian parenthood. The universe of discourse within which they argue is one which has been created for them by the Christian tradition. They are dissenters from that tradition, extreme dissenters, but they find themselves unable to ignore it. Nor are they

entirely complacent in their dissent. As Sartre writes :

"The existentialist finds it very troublesome (*gênant*) that God does not exist, because with Him disappears all possibility of finding values in an intelligible world ; nor can there be any *a priori* good, because there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it . . . I am very much vexed (*faché*) that it should be so."¹

That brings me to the second of the two considerations which I said had bearing on the theology of the frontier, namely, that for us in this country it is seldom a frontier between Christianity on the one hand and either an alternative religion or even anything that is sufficiently definite to do duty for an alternative religion on the other. We have to face doubt and negation rather than counter-affirmation ; agnosticism perhaps, but seldom an alternative *gnosis*. T. S. Eliot claims that in that sense we are still living within a Christian society, and that the frontier is within that society rather than between it and some other. "A society," he writes, "has not ceased to be Christian until it has become positively something else. It is my contention that we have to-day a culture which is mainly negative, but which, so far as it is positive, is still Christian."² A certain type of communism perhaps comes nearest to being a full-blown positive alternative to the Christian gospel, but this type is little represented in this country, where indeed it is not impossible to call oneself a Christian and a Communist at the same time. When therefore a man tells me he is not a Christian, and I ask what then he is, he is more than likely to put me off with a shrug of the shoulders, as if to say either that he was nothing or that he did not quite know what he was.

Theological Principles

Our question then is as to the theological principles which ought to guide our parleyings across this kind of frontier,

¹ *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*, pp. 35, 89.

² *The Idea of a Christian Society*, p. 13.

or in this kind of borderland. It is a question on which contemporary theologians are by no means agreed. In the autobiographical sketch to which I have already referred, Paul Tillich speaks of the division of opinion within German Protestantism concerning this matter in the nineteen-twenties. He himself stood "on the frontier between Lutheranism and socialism", but most of his fellow churchmen found in their Lutheranism a barrier to their socialism. And the new direction which Protestant theology was then taking in Germany increased the difficulty of mutual understanding between the two. As he says :

"The well-known developments in German theology after the first world war show most clearly that it is almost impossible for a nation educated in Lutheranism to proceed from religion to socialism The falsely so-called 'Dialectical' theology established by Karl Barth, in spite of the Calvinist elements in Barth himself, has accepted a decisive Lutheran element in its conception of the Kingdom of God as purely transcendent."¹

I may add in parenthesis that, politically speaking, Barth is himself something of a socialist, but he does not bring his Christianity and his socialism into such close relation to each other as would make him call himself a Christian socialist.

However, what here concerns us is not the opinions of Karl Barth, but a certain broad theological tendency which has recently manifested itself in continental, and especially in German Protestantism. It is sometimes said that the German theology of the period before the first world war said "Yes," to culture, whereas recent German theology says "No" to it. That is no doubt an over-simplification, but certainly we now observe a certain withdrawal of faith into itself, and away from its cultural relationships. Hence the approach to the frontier, and the operations at the frontier, are now very different from what they were in my own student days in Germany. Barth's celebrated denial of any *Anknüpfungspunkt* (point of contact) between the

¹ Op. cit., p. 55.

Gospel and human nature is closely connected with the revulsion of continental Protestantism against any form of apologetics and its almost exclusive concentration on dogmatics. In addressing those who are outside the circle of full Christian commitment, it is said, the Christian should not argue with his hearers, for that would imply the existence of a relevant common premise, and there is none such ; nor should he in any way find his starting-point where his hearers are, in their existing sentiments or state of mind, and gently lead them on to something more integrally Christian. Rather should he proclaim the Gospel in its fullest and most uncompromising form, abating nothing of the offence that it must always give to those who have not already embraced it, or of the foolishness which it must always appear to all other wisdoms.

This approach to the frontier has a certain strength about it. It has proved itself to possess a certain effectiveness. Not only was it a natural reaction against the broad-churchmanship of the earlier period, with its extreme liberalizing tendency and its too easy compliance with modern ways of thinking, but it gained a hearing in quarters where the other had made little impression. Men respect the robust proclamation of a full-fledged conviction even when they cannot find their own way into it. The milder acceptances of Christian truth into which the theologians and preachers of the earlier period had endeavoured to nurse them might be easier to approach, but there were those to whom they seemed not important enough to worry much about, whereas when Christian truth was presented in this more uncompromising form, the doubt could not be about its importance but only about its credibility.

A Tendency in English-speaking Christianity

This type of frontier theology and frontier strategy has reached us, as I have said, from continental protestantism, and more from Lutheran than from Calvinist sources, and more from German than from, say, Scandinavian Luther-

anism. It has, however, exercised considerable, though strictly limited, influence within the English-speaking world. Moreover, on one side of it—but I think only on one side of it—it is closely related to a much more widespread tendency which has manifested itself quite independently in this country—the tendency of fully observant Christians to close up their ranks, to advertize their minority position in the community, and to deny the application of the adjective “Christian”, in any important sense, either to the society in which we live or to those members of it who are not fully observant churchmen. “Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate,” writes St. Paul to certain Corinthian Christians who were allowing themselves to be “unequally yoked” with idolatrous pagans; but, as the words are now applied, we are asked to come out from among our fellow members of a society which used to be called Christendom, the *corpus christianum*. Nor is this owing principally to the novel features of our modern situation, but rather to a changed attitude towards the situation in which Christians have always stood, though without recognizing or acknowledging it. The *corpus christianum*, it is said, never was an authentic thing. True Christians always were in a minority. And true Christians are the only kind of Christians there are. This type of protest is, of course, nothing new in the history of Christianity; it is as old as Montanism, and has again and again been represented in later times. The very least we can say about it is that it is a protest from which we have something to learn. It has great strength in it, and sometimes great evangelizing effectiveness. It will result in a frontier strategy closely related to that of the mainly continental movement with which I have compared it.

The “Latent Church”

But there is another view that may be taken. For a first statement of it, I turn again to Tillich’s autobiographical

sketch, and to the section of it entitled "On the frontier between church and society".

"The problem of church and society prompted me to distinguish in an essay called 'Church and Humanist Society' between a *manifest* and a *latent* Church. It was not the old Protestant distinction between the visible and the invisible Church which was to be discussed in this essay; rather was I concerned with a differentiation within the visible Church. The existence of a Christian humanism outside the Christian Church seems to me to make such a distinction necessary. It will not do to designate as non-churchly all those who have become alienated from the organized Churches and traditional creeds. My life within these groups for half a generation showed me how much latent Church there is in them: the experience of the finite character of human existence; the quest for the eternal and the unconditioned; an absolute devotion to justice and love; a hope which is more than any Utopia; an appreciation of Christian values; and a most delicate apprehension of the ideological misuse of Christianity in the Church and in the State. It often seemed to me as if the latent Church, which I found in these groups, was a truer Church than the organized churches, because its members did not presume to be in possession of the truth. Of course, the last few years [before 1936] have shown that only the organized Church is able to carry on the struggle against the pagan attacks upon Christianity. The latent Church has neither the religious nor the organizational weapons necessary for this struggle, though the use of these threatens to deepen the chasm between Church and society. A latent Church is a concept belonging to the frontier situation, and it is the fate of countless Protestant men of our day to be standing on this frontier."¹

On this frontier Tillich himself stands. That is the burden of his autobiographical sketch as a whole. He has always felt himself to have a foot on either side of the frontier, with a stake in both camps. It is natural, therefore, that he should be out of sympathy both with the frontier theology and with the frontier strategy associated with the other tendencies of which I have spoken. Obviously one who speaks as Tillich does of a latent Church is offering us

¹ Op. cit., p. 48 f.

very different guidance from those who urge us to demarcate the frontier more clearly than ever before. Tillich speaks of many frontiers, or of many sectors of the frontier, but none of these separates Christianity from what lies beyond it. It is not on the frontier of Christianity that he stands, nor even on the frontier of the Church in the broader meaning he gives to it, but on the frontier of the organized churches—the manifest church, as he calls it. And there are many who feel themselves to be on this frontier, in this borderland. Several of my own University colleagues have declared to me their belief that Christianity is the only hope of the world, who nevertheless adopt a very detached position towards the existing churches; and one of these, when a student asked him for guidance in the matter, replied by saying, "If you are outside the Church, stay outside, but keep in touch with those within. If you are inside the Church, stay inside, but keep in touch with those without." Another example is, of course, the case of Simone Weil, who wrote thus in one of her letters to Father Perrin:

"It seems to me that the will of God is that I should not enter the Church at present And yet I was filled with a very great joy when you said the thoughts which I confided to you were not incompatible with membership of the Church, and that, in consequence, I was not outside it in spirit."

"I cannot help wondering whether in these days when so large a proportion of humanity is sunk in materialism, God does not want there to be some men and women who have given themselves to him and to Christ and who yet remain outside the Church."¹

I have thus offered some examples of two very different types of frontier theology and frontier strategy. They may perhaps be regarded as somewhat extreme examples, and I suppose it is true that the majority of present Christian engagements on the frontier falls somewhere between these two extremes. Yet even in this country, where the preference in all such matters is towards a mediating position,

¹ *Waiting on God*, English Translation, pp. 4-6.

one has of late years been aware of a cleavage between the type of Christian proclamation which contended itself with a statement of the traditional Christian teaching in its traditional terms, and then saying "Take it or leave it", and the contrasted type which sought first for the soft spot in the secular world's defences and then for some improved apologetic weapon which might avail to penetrate it. One has also the feeling that most of us do not have an entirely free choice between the two strategies, since so much is determined by the point at which we ourselves stand. I remember one University mission where the contrast between the two missionaries was the subject of widespread remark in this very respect.

Christianity without Religion ?

I must, however, give you one more example. I cannot help referring in this context to the posthumously published letters of that saint and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who I am proud to think was once my student. Some extracts from the German volume, *Widerstand und Ergebung* were published in the January number (1952) of *The Ecumenical Review*, and from these I quote. Bonhoeffer, lying in one of Hitler's prisons before being hanged, makes the point that throughout the whole past the proclamation of the Christian gospel rested on the premise that men were religious, and in those days they really were religious. But they are so no longer. They now manage very well without religion. No doubt there are still certain limits to this, especially the limit of death, but what if even that were to become subject to human control? Bonhoeffer's problem is then how to interpret and present Christianity in a non-religious dress, which will make evident its relevance, not to the religious alone but to the whole world. Here is some of what he says :

"How can Christ become the Lord even of those with no religion? If religion is no more than the garment of Christianity—and even that garment has had very different aspects in different

periods—then what is a religionless Christianity? Barth, who is the only one to have started on this line of thought, has still not proceeded to its logical conclusion, but has arrived at a positivism of revelation which has nevertheless remained essentially a restoration. For the religionless working man, or indeed man generally, nothing that makes any real difference is gained by that. The questions needing to be answered would surely be: What is the significance of a Church (church, parish, preaching, Christian life) in a religionless world? How do we speak of God—without religion, i.e. without the temporally-influenced presuppositions of metaphysics, inwardness, and so on? How do we speak . . . in 'secular' fashion, of 'God', in what way are we in a 'religionless' and 'secular' sense Christians, in what way are we *Ekklesia*, 'those who are called forth', not considering ourselves religiously as specially favoured, but as wholly belonging to the world? Then Christ is no longer an object of religion, but something quite different, indeed and in truth the Lord of the world. Yet what does this signify? What is the place of worship and prayer in the entire absence of religion? . . ."

"The Pauline question whether circumcision is a condition of justification is to-day, I consider, the question whether religion is a condition of salvation . . . I often ask myself why a 'Christian instinct' frequently draws me more to the religionless than to the religious, by which I mean not with any intention whatever of evangelizing them, but rather, I might almost say, in 'brotherhood'. While I often shrink among religious people from speaking of God by name—because that name somehow seems to me here not to ring true, and I strike myself as rather dishonest (it is especially bad when the others begin to speak in religious terminology: then I dry up completely and feel somehow oppressed and ill at ease)—with people who have no religion I am able on occasion to speak of God quite quietly and as it were naturally."¹

These extracts seem to me particularly significant because they come from a man the starting-point of whose thinking was the Barthian critique of liberalism, and who stood at

¹ *The Ecumenical Review*, January 1952 (Vol. IV. No. 2), pp. 131-138.

A volume of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters* translated into English is shortly to be published by the S.C.M. Press.

the very centre of the return from liberalism to confession-alism in the German Church, but who afterwards came to feel that the Barthian and confessional movement developed in a way that made it ignore the real problems of the frontier—problems which liberalism itself had faced, in however misdirected a way. I shall conclude by giving another example of this, though it is a much milder example. Jacques Ellul's book *Présence au Monde* has recently been translated into English under the misleading title *The Presence of the Kingdom*. It is from first to last a discussion of the theology and strategy of the frontier. Most of it reads very much like any other statement of Continental Protestant Confessionalism, but I quote the following extracts from its final pages.

"I know very well that people will say to me, 'But what's the good of all this labour? Isn't simple preaching enough?' In reality this so-called confidence in the 'efficacy of the Word of God' betrays a lack of charity towards men, and an indifference to their actual situation; to some extent it is a 'spirituality' which is not in accordance with the mind of Christ. The Bible always shows us God, laying hold of man in his practical situation, in the setting of his life, enabling him to act with the means of his own time in the midst of the problems of his own day. (Page 39).

"To proclaim the word of God to men in the abstract, to people who are in a situation which prevents them from understanding it, means that we are tempting God. Let us meditate once more on that incisive saying of our Lord: 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.'¹ This is a striking description of the relation between the Church and the world at the present time.' (Page 141).

In these extracts from Bonhoeffer and Ellul there are signs of *rapprochement* between the two lines of frontier theology and strategy which I have tried to distinguish.

I wish finally to quote a passage from Tillich:

"Wherever the question of the language of the Christian gospel is taken seriously . . . great difficulties arise. It is certain that the

¹ Matt. vii, 6.

original religious terminology, as it is used in the Bible and in the liturgies of the Ancient Church, cannot be supplanted. They are religious original or archetypal words (*Urworte*) of mankind. . . . But these original or archetypal words have been robbed of their original power by our objective thinking and the scientific conception of the world, and thus have become subject to dissolution. . . . A situation is hopeless and meaningless in which the speaker means the original word, and the listener hears the objective word. Thus we may understand the proposal, which is meant symbolically rather than literally, that the Church impose a thirty-year silence upon all its archetypal words. But if it should do this, as it has done in a few instances, it would be necessary to develop a new terminology. And all such attempts to translate the archaic language of liturgy and the Bible into a modern one have been deplorably futile. They represented disintegration and not a new creation. . . . Thus the only solution is to use the religious 'original words' and at the same time make clear their original meaning, by disavowing their secular and distorted usage, i.e., to stand between the two terminologies and recapture anew the original religious terminology from the frontier. . . . It would be regrettable if a blind and arrogant orthodoxy should monopolize these words and thus confuse many who have a feeling for religious reality, either driving them into paganism or thrusting them finally out of the Church." (Pages 46-48).

That seems to me to show a very just appreciation of that problem of language which is an integral part of the question of frontier strategy.

[This paper was read at a Conference of University Teachers arranged by the Don's Advisory Group of the Christian Frontier Council and the S.C.M. at Swanwick, Derbyshire, from March 27th-31st, 1952.]

INTERIM

A Lawyers' Conference

There were forty representatives, from ten European countries and the U.S.A., at the Ecumenical Institute's Conference on the position of the Christian lawyer in the practice of his profession. Three of the main discourses, respectively French, English and German, showed characteristically different interpretations of this position. Professor Jacques Ellul of Bordeaux spoke of a crisis of the French legal system, which in his view has fallen behind the needs of modern life, to the loss of its social dignity, especially in the eyes of non-Christians. The French delegation was evidently in disaccord over this issue, and others thought the lecturer had over-stated his case. Sir Arthur Forde, restricting himself more closely to the set question, found no clear difference between a sound Christian and a sound non-Christian administration of legal business itself but only in the human contacts in which it involves the lawyer. Everyone seemed to have a wholesome respect for the English system.

The really deep waters were entered with Dr. Schrey's address in German. He concerned himself with the fundamental tension between the Law and the Gospel, as one between the regulation of self-assertions and the surrender to God. Some listeners of other nations regarded this approach as too profound to be profitable: but it is easy to see that the distinction drawn by Dr. Schrey was implicit in the statements of the previous speakers.

An Italian said that there was no justice for Communists in Italy. This, the Conference agreed, was contrary to Christian principle, in spite of the mortal enmity of Communism to Christianity. This judgment illustrates very well the general problem before such a Conference to-day. From a purely juridical standpoint, the position of Communists in, say, Italy can not now be completely isolated from that of non-Communists in Soviet countries.

* * * *

The Scottish Christian Industrial Order

An organization to cross the frontier between the Church and industry was formally launched by over a thousand laymen of the Church of Scotland when they met in Edinburgh on 26th April at a special National One-day Conference for Laymen in Industry. The opening address was by a guest from England, Sir George Schuster, whose recent book *Christianity and Human Relations in Industry* has been discussed in the *Frontier*.

He welcomed the Conference as a prelude to action, to getting away from generalities, and to constructive attention to human problems in industry. The need was for individual people at all levels in industry, grounded on a right faith, to translate the general Christian teachings into the specific terms which they could apply day by day to their jobs and their industrial life ; for example, the manager would learn from St. Paul to say, " Though I strive in my business to fulfil a social function and to produce things that meet a true community need ; though I take full account of consumer interests and charge absolutely fair prices ; though I pay good wages and allow neither myself nor my shareholders to profiteer—yet, if in my relations with my fellow men, for whose employment I am responsible, I show no spirit of human kindness or Christian love ; if I fail to make my full contribution to ensuring that their breadwinning work provides a foundation for a worthy human life, then I am not really acting like a Christian."

In the other addresses Lord Bilsland, President of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), and Councillor David Walker, Chairman of the Coatbridge Trades Council, spoke from very different parts of industry ; they related the needs set out by Sir George Schuster to what the Church of Scotland has already done from recent small beginnings and can further do.

The afternoon session of the Conference was given to a lively discussion which ended with unanimous and enthusiastic approval of a constitution for the new Scottish Christian Industrial Order. Its aim shall be to advance the knowledge and understanding of the Christian Faith and its practice ; to promote the best human relations in industry on the basis of that Faith, and to further the application of its principles throughout industrial life and society. Membership is open to all communicant members of the Church who are or have been engaged in manual, technical, clerical, administrative or professional work, whether employer, manager or employee. The Order is to be organized in Branches. In congregations, there are to be Church Branches, which will afford members facilities for studying Christian principles and their application in the field of industry ; while in places of work, there are to be Work Branches, which will form the spearhead of the Church in industry and will be constantly concerned that human relations should be on the Christian level and that industrial organization and method should conform to the Christian standard. Since the Order is basically religious, each Branch

is to make common worship an essential part of its activity. Each Work Branch will, whenever possible, have an Industrial Chaplain associated with it ; but the Order is to be essentially a movement of laymen.

The spirit evident at the Edinburgh conference gave proof that here is a real response to the present-day need for a revival of the Christian Faith as a living force in all life, and for breaking down the division between religion and daily affairs. The mission in industry is to build up Christian values and come to grips with the problems and evils, rather than any negative aim such as fighting Communism ; it is a heartening omen that the Order is launched with a confident faith and a clear vision of its aim, joined with humility in the realization that the Church and its Chaplains, as a body, has as yet little knowledge of industry or of the exact character of the problems and issues in industry which rightly concern the Christian in virtue of his faith. The Church of Scotland has in the past had a remarkable tradition of practical concern with industrial problems, as it witnessed in its surveys (beginning with Dr. Chalmers in 1822 and culminating in the Report of the Baillie Commission, 1942-45, published in 1946 under the title *God's Will for Church and Nation*) of the state of industry ; the people who in other parts of these islands are striving to revive the Christian faith in industry will wish the new Order well and will look with close attention to the Scottish lead.

* * * *

“ The Meeting of West with West ”

American and European affairs and prospects having become as interlocked as they are, “ the West ” on this side of the Atlantic is in need of more knowledge of its better half on the other side. With this in mind, and under the title headlined above, the Church Union Summer School of Sociology is to meet at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, from July 28 to August 1 to study America and its significance for Europe.

Lectures on the American “ way of life ”, on American religion, politics and economics will be given by the Revs. Daniel Jenkins, Dr. E. R. Hardy, Donald Mathers and Dr. R. P. Casey, under the Chairmanship of the Rev. Dr. V. A. Demant. A general introduction will be contributed by Mr. Philip Mairet. Application for further particulars should be made to Miss H. Highley, 9 Talbot Road, London, N. 6.

THE C.D.C.

NOT many people are likely to read the Report of the Colonial Development Corporation which came out on May 2. Nor can its dry, if brilliantly succinct account of fifty-three government commercial undertakings be recommended as entertainment. But the Corporation publishes a more popular periodical¹ and its fortunes are worth following ; they also deserve and may need the goodwill of intelligent citizens, for a reason we are concerned to emphasize. Considered as an effort, conscientious in conception, to discharge an immense imperial responsibility, there has never been anything quite like this Corporation.

The British colonies (as is not always remembered) nearly all originated as spheres of purely commercial private enterprise, for which the British Government took political charge, often reluctantly and in some cases to regulate unprincipled exploitation, in the interests both of the natives and its own subjects' reputation. Its local governments, often excellent as far as they went, had limited means of controlling and assisting the economic development of regions mainly dependent on trading firms for capital, a defect which grew worse when Britain was partly living on its capital before the late war. It was just before the outbreak of hostilities that Britain awoke to the vast problem of the colonies, and realized the deplorable conditions into which many of them had been allowed to sink. The period of research, of enquiry into remedies and of demand for funds, culminated in the institution of the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. A further instrument of development was soon seen to be necessary ; and this led to the Act of Parliament of 1948 charged with colonial

¹ *Colonial Development*: The Quarterly Magazine of the Colonial Development Corporation. (*Illustrated*), 1s. od.

development on a commercial basis. It was authorized to borrow up to £100 million, but was responsible for the repayment of capital and interest.

Another Corporation born out of the same crisis—the Overseas Food Corporation—set out all unprepared, only to earn undying fame for the greatest possible failure in the very aim that its name professed. The C.D.C.'s mandate was very different and unprecedented in scope.

It was to undertake any kind of productive enterprise calculated to do good in any colony, either upon its own initiative or in partnership with any privately financed project that was desirable but would not otherwise be realized. Present commitments of the Corporation, of both these kinds, already cover nearly the whole range of basic colonial undertakings—agriculture, fisheries, mining, afforestation, building material and manufactures—all of which increase the possibilities of advance in every other local enterprise.

A national Corporation with such instructions was doomed to initial losses and a hazardous future. Nevertheless, it represents a development of realism mixed with high responsibility in the colonial field, and justifies hopes of some sound, if inconspicuous ultimate successes.

Its aim is not to make money, though it is to do so if it can, and try to avoid losing money. Its primary object is to set up or promote economic activities which will redound to the benefit of their colonial region, and would not come into existence without such initiative. The Corporation is not strictly limited to this aim but that is its first concern. The discernment of the right openings must therefore need sociological as well as economic vision, sometimes even statesmanship and diplomacy: and to achieve the aim itself presupposes selection of the right experts, in itself a rare kind of expertise. Even then it means shouldering the initial losses to which any pioneering work is liable.

It is usually forgotten, by the way, that the development of the pre-war Empire was not all profits. Thousands of

millions were also lost in the last four decades before 1914 by our private enterprises, much of it in the colonies where traders acknowledged no obligation to consider the harmonious social development of each region as this Corporation is expected to do.

The C.D.C., with its present authorized expenditure, is a modest affair compared with the size and needs of the whole colonial field. The failures disclosed are however formidable enough in the present state of the national finances.

But the dead losses written off are nearly all from the first ventures. There was admittedly initial floundering and inefficiency, and then a new régime with Lord Reith as Chairman. Under his firm direction the unsound central management was reorganized, a devolutionary scheme begun, unpromising or abortive schemes were ruthlessly purged or liquidated. The position that Lord Reith found, as it was disclosed in the painfully candid first Report (1950) was one of heavy losses. Yet there had not been time to cut out all the dead wood; the purge was still in process. That is why still worse things appear in the present 1951 Report. By the evidence as a whole the worst is over, but there will still be losses and even perhaps some total fiascos, though fewer. Since losses get all the headlines where public money is concerned, one must take care that the gains are not passed over, and forgotten.

The Agricultural Project in North Nigeria is a good example. It shows a financial loss, on the trading side, of nearly £40,000 already, which far exceeds the estimate, though this will be borne largely by the local Government. On the other hand, it is turning an area of 100 square miles of wild country into a peasant settlement comprising ten villages of about 80 farms each. Already 159 miles of road have been laid, old wells restored and new ones sunk, and one village has its full complement of farming families. A demonstration farm for scientific husbandry and research has begun to instruct the settlers by example.

The "grouped undertaking" in Dominica is another case, showing an almost equal loss and less likely ever to show a profit to the Corporation. But it is developing plantations of the fruits the island can best produce, and building a hydro-electric power-station with cold storage plant. The means it is providing for this island economy to earn its living in the modern world are of a prospective value that no one can question.

Beside cases of this type there are pioneering projects for the development of primary products whose benefits are in the nature of things realizable only on a long view. The forestry projects are instances of this, notably that of British Guiana; and the mining investigations in Tanganyika, which are disclosing mineral and coal deposits in the territory which hold great and indubitable values for the future.

By demonstrating its faith with Work and money, the Corporation arouses the faith of the inhabitants. It undertakes nothing that the governors of the colonies do not approve and encourage: it invites them to suggest projects (and gets fewer good suggestions than it hoped for). Its new policy of regional devolution, which delegates the control of each colonial area to managers resident in them, is designed to make the utmost use of local association, to train native technicians and bring in the indigenous population. Each enterprise is intended to build up its own managerial, financial and technical associations, with a view to their eventually buying the Corporation out, after which the whole undertaking will be owned by people on the spot. The final aim of the Corporation is to render itself unnecessary.

In this respect, its work is really an extension to the field of economics of the principle Britain has long professed, and acted upon, in its imperial politics. The ultimate economic advantage to Britain will be no more—nor less—than the general improvement of the colonial areas as trading customers with whom British commerce has tradi-

tional links that it may hope to maintain. A paradox of this Corporation's position is that while it is essentially not a profit making body, it is (rightly) bound to keep its current work measured strictly by commercial standards. That will make it vulnerable to attack if, in hard times ahead, its losses should again be alarming and its achievements still too little understood. The present Report has had, not surprisingly, a glum if generally respectful reception. Critics have said that the Corporation had better mark time till the new system proves its worth, with more than faint murmurs that if it was necessary to do something, was this the way to do it?

The answer is that if this Corporation did not exist, something very like it would have to be invented. Between what the colonial governors can do with Colonial Office backing and the services of the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, there is this area of economic need in which public initiative must somehow second, and even lead, private enterprise. Whatever machinery may be devised for this the task will be the same, and this machinery has had far too short a trial to be scrapped.

Also, success will depend fundamentally upon the men forthcoming for the work. In its present Chairman's opinion, the future of the C.D.C. depends upon a very few men, principally upon the Regional Controllers. They need to have very high qualifications: to be commercially astute, to show leadership, to be capable of understanding the people they work with and of forwarding local interests although their own pay and instructions come from London. There are still places—indeed, there is a new sphere of action—for men who, educated in the ideas and outlook of the world to-day, have the same qualities of character as those who built up Britain's reputation in the past.

P. M.

PUBLICITY : AND THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY

*An Address given at a Frontier Luncheon at Queen Mary Hall,
London, W.C. 1, on 23 April 1952, by*

KENNETH GRUBB, C.M.G., LL.D.

I WOULD never have chosen this subject for a talk myself: others chose it for me. Moreover, I suspect that I am supposed to make a strong plea for a more widespread use of modern publicity by the Church, whereas the truth is that I think differently. Those who hold that the task of the Church, particularly its evangelistic task, can be sufficiently discharged by improving the Church's publicity are mistaken. But that is not to say that it has no part to play: it has an important one. What, then, is it? My answer to this is spread over the sections of this address. The first is some comments on publicity and evangelism. After a short digression on the meaning of publicity and propaganda, I discuss the advantages and disadvantages which the Church possesses in its approach to the use of publicity. Finally, I contrast the function of prophecy with that of publicity.

I

I am not sure that to link evangelism with publicity really clarifies the function of either. This mistake is commonly made, with the result that evangelism has come to be regarded as something that involves a considerable and expensive use of the media of publicity. Publicity should, however, be largely concerned not merely with the message but with the acts and deeds of the Church, the exciting things that can and do happen when men are fully committed to God. A really successful evangelism surely awaits a deeper

insight into the meaning of the Gospel to a man's life in the complex relationships of to-day, for men will not willingly commit themselves to something which has no meaning for them. Moreover, evangelism demands a personal response to the old question, "What must I do to be saved?" I don't think publicity can help a lot here: its field is a different one.

We came near to making this mistake in the Church of England. Just after the War, the report *Towards the Conversion of England* had a considerable vogue. It included a section calling attention to the importance of being earnest in publicity and using the modern methods of communication—as the phrase goes. That was followed by the appointment of a special publicity commission, and for a substantial period we wrestled with all this. We interviewed numerous persons and had endless discussions. But I cannot say that we made any remarkable discoveries. Probably many people who had vaguely thought it excellent if the Church were to go out to get more publicity had given little real thought to the matter. They had not faced the question "What shall we publicize?": still less had they sat down and considered the cost.

I always suspect publicity when it is called in to save a desperate situation. We used to have that in the War. The people concerned with publicity would be fully aware that some aspect of our affairs was being sadly misunderstood, say in the United States, and they would say so in no uncertain terms. But the people in charge of the offending piece of policy would give little heed until things got very bad. They would then say in effect "Let's have a little publicity to get us out of this mess". But it was then much too late, things had gone too far, and so powerful a current of adverse opinion had set in, very possibly based on complete misconceptions, that no counter-propaganda Canute could stay the tide.

I suspect that something like this has happened in the Church. Religion, as we keep saying, has lost its grip, so

everyone has a bright idea and publicity is called upon to restore it. But you restore a grip not by advertizing your strength, but by putting more heart and muscle into the body. Anyway, if everyone has a bright idea at the same time, the chances are that, even if it is an idea worthy of the name, it is not particularly bright.

Here I must make a short digression. When dealing with political or military affairs I make a sharp distinction between publicity and propaganda, and I would never use the one term when I meant the other thing. The distinction is to a large extent arbitrary, but I have found it useful. I have trained myself to think of publicity in terms of the process it involves, that is the diffusion and expansion of views and facts. But it is convenient to think of propaganda in terms of the purpose in mind, and propaganda by A is A's promotion of his own interest, or if you prefer, of the cause in which he is interested, by appealing to B's interest.

I apply these ideas to the cause of religion in this way. The Christian impact on the society of England is a long-term enterprise. There has been such a falling-away from religion that it is useless to hope to restore it in a day, or a year. Those who pray and work for the restoration of the obedience of the Gospel, are engaged in a large and arduous task. "Desperate ills by desperate remedies are relieved, or not at all".

When a long-term aim is in view, I do not believe that just getting publicity, in the limited sense in which I am using the word just now, is enough. That is, I doubt whether fastening on an event or personality, or a series of such, and seeing how many column-inches one can secure, or how many travelling exhibitions can be built up, is adequate. I believe in serious propaganda, that is in first of all defining our aim, which should be as broad as possible, say to bring home to men the full record of the contemporary acts and deeds of the Church. That done, it is essential to prepare an appreciation of the "audience", and this must above all contain a careful analysis of the

resistances to be expected. Then the immediate objectives should be stated, and many of these would be directed to the breaking-down of these resistances. Then you need to set out the themes on which to dwell in order to contribute towards your objectives. At that stage the plan can be turned over to competent technicians to say just what media should be used and how much should be spent. Of course, such a campaign must make use of all the news that will serve its purpose, and frequently create it ; but always with one or other of these objectives in view.

II

However, I don't want to labour this distinction between publicity and propaganda, and I will confine myself to the term publicity. A realistic appreciation might reveal that the fault was not in our publicity, but in ourselves. Compared with many organizations the Church has already invaluable media of publicity. It has permanent exhibitions open to all in the shape of its historic churches and cathedrals. It has scores of pulpits, agents specifically trained to speak called clergy, and others ready to be so trained called laity. It has many corner positions and facilities for solus sites. It has a sympathetic B.B.C., and by no means a hostile film world ; it has much goodwill in the dailies and the weeklies, and a very large fund of it in the provincial press. It has a steady flow of publications and some old and strong publishing houses on its side. A realistic appreciation would take good note of all this. Why then is there an uneasy feeling that the Church should be doing and getting more publicity ?

I don't know, but I can make a guess. The guess, however, does lead back to the obstacles in the life of the Church itself, and I'm not sure that I am meant, or qualified, to speak about that. Too much publicity, irrelevant publicity, publicity that is too obviously self-interested, all create hostile reactions and deep suspicions, vocal if people care

enough, sullen if they don't. That is one of the difficulties the Church faces. I succumb to these suspicions. I find myself constantly questioning whether we really have an awful lot to talk about. Not only so, but I find that even when there is a good story, my friends will not listen because they deeply suspect the motives and disinterestedness of the Church. This kind of suspicion, although it may perhaps be called a hostile reaction, does not really go so far as open hostility. It expresses itself in polite indifference. I doubt whether it can be conquered by publicity, until publicity has more to talk about. In other words, we have got to find some way of restoring the achievement of the Church before we can do a great deal by publicizing it.

This, I'm afraid, amounts to saying that there is a belief that the Church has overplayed her hand, talked too much and done too little. The indictment is true, but it is also true that if you preach the Christian religion with its exacting demands and standards, you are bound to lay yourself open to the accusation.

What is the remedy? It is essential to show that the Church is efficient, but it is even more necessary to show that its message is highly relevant and its acts and deeds are therefore mighty. Unless the Church is relevant in its message, and in the accomplishments that flow from it, it is of little use spending money on publicity, since the publicizing of irrelevance, although it may be the desirable business of the amusement trade, and great fun, is not the job of the Church. And the average man has yet to convince himself that the Church is relevant to his daily life. Too often it exists where he sleeps, and sleeps when he works. It uses him as a deacon or sidesman, but ignores him as a fishmonger or cop. Until the Church becomes relevant, the argument for publicity is greatly weakened. But I will add this. I believe that a really serious, thorough and comprehensive attempt to draw up a collective publicity plan for the Churches and get it accepted by them, would bring them up forcibly against the relevance of their own exis-

tence. The appreciation contained in such a plan would take many months of work by a considerable team of persons : the chances of its being accepted by the Churches would be, I submit, very slight.

This, in turn, at once reveals another of the main difficulties in the path of a publicity campaign. It is the old, familiar one of the Churches' divisions. Viewed from the position of the Church in the world—the tactical position, as a rearmament-minded generation calls it—these divisions fall into three classes : theological divisions which are, indeed, assumed to be the fundamental cause of denominationalism ; divisions on practical, internal questions ; and divisions on practical, external questions. By the second of these I mean questions about organization, authority and distribution of powers, which affect only the relationships of the Churches to one another ; by the third, I mean the divisions which arise from their divergent attitudes and witness to the world. These latter divisions create publicity in themselves, but seriously impair publicity directed towards constructive objectives. If churchmen are continually divided over matters of public import, their witness lacks conviction. Yet this often happens, and these meetings have had a recent example in the testimony of the Churches on gambling. No one supposes that unity of outlook on anything is easy to secure, but disunity should be kept domestic as far as possible. The Churches are fond of their tensions, and unless they have a few good ones on hand they are positively unhappy, but no one else is much interested in them, and, if a little interested, calls them quarrels.

The Church has then got itself into a position of much difficulty and I do not see how publicity can extricate it. The names, the persons, the acts, and the positions on which publicity builds are already over-familiar, and the same chap who has never looked into a Gospel of Christ uses the name of Christ with monotonous emphasis in his half-pint argument. In fact, religion in this respect is in much the same position as other aspects of culture. There is an acquaint-

tance with terms, an interest in outstanding personalities, but an indifference to meanings. It is not publicity that forces men to ask what is the meaning of life or whether God has ever communicated meaning to it; it is adversity: yet not excessive adversity, only moderate adversity. There would be a real opening for the Christian publicity that knew where and how to seize this at the strategic moment.

Finally, a real attempt to grapple with the problem will also reveal that some of the techniques of modern publicity may not be agreeable to the Christian mind and temper. This, however, is nothing remarkable, for all the techniques of publicity are rarely, if ever, applicable at any one time to any one problem. I shall be criticized, of course, for this statement, but could it not be applied to the standards of many professions? Such things as the special creation and planning of news, comment and gossip are common practices and, perhaps, belong to the small beer of the subject. But take flattery-value, and snob-appeal. In pushing certain articles or attitudes these are invaluable, particularly, perhaps, in such lines as the fashion trade. Now the Churches have their own snob-appeal, though, no doubt, it is much reduced in these days. There are many people, however, who would go to some lengths to claim the acquaintance of an Archbishop or a senior ecclesiastic. This is, perhaps, an extreme instance. Is it a sentiment on which the Churches should play? I doubt it.

III

What then is lacking before the Churches can adopt a really comprehensive publicity scheme? I think the answer is a revival of prophecy, leading to creative acts for the transformation of man in society. There is an enormous difference between prophecy, in the sense of a declaration of a word from God for the times, and publicity. If you tell the house of Jacob their transgressions, and the house

of Israel their sins—that is prophecy. Ordinary publicity is the technique and means of popularization and of broad announcement, as the very word shows. We need them both, but I fancy that publicity without prophecy is as the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal of all things without love. Prophecy may, indeed, need publicity if it is to be heard, but so long as our prophecy is ineffective in its penetrating power, whether it is directed to the Church, society, or the individual, our publicity will merely harden the surface of the heart. The real rôle of publicity should lie in the divulcation of the acts of God that flow from obedience to the prophetic word.

But a convenient juxtaposition of words does not solve anything. If the spirit of prophecy revisits the Church, how is the word of prophecy to be publicized? I should suppose that one of its standard platforms was the pulpit. Here, indeed, the Church is in a privileged position, and should make good use of it. Yet, even here, one wonders whether the pulpit is well used. The ministry of the Word is an essential part of the Christian ministry, yet the spirit of the times is against the approach from the pulpit. Men prefer the methods of discussion and exchange in which, useful though they may be, there is often an absence of decisiveness—"your guess is as good as mine". Perhaps it is for this reason, more than for the merits of the "absolutes" professed, that Moral Rearmament conferences have been a success. They supply more opportunity for frank witness, discussion and reaction.

I will now sum up my views, which are as follows. The Church has already an astonishing apparatus of publicity at its disposal. Its main problem is to use and improve this; the ways of doing it are more a matter for committee discussion than for a meeting of this kind. An extensive and expensive publicity campaign should not be indulged in without very careful preparation. This would bring the Church up sharply against certain obstacles in its own life which would have to be removed, if efficacy were to be

obtained. But no publicity is of itself sufficient for the task. It is apt to lead to a reaction of polite deafness or to a healing of "the hurt of my people" lightly. It must have its own forerunner in a revival of the spirit and word of prophecy which may even deepen the unpopularity of the Church.

I am afraid that I disappoint you. I was expected, no doubt, to outline elaborate schemes of Christian publicity to popularize the Gospel, advertize the Church and commend its Lord. I was also expected, I fear, to draw upon experience of publicity in other spheres and produce a spiritual panacea for the times. These things I do not do. But I pray that the time will soon come when they may effectively be done.

POETRY IN THE CINEMA

"Murder in the Cathedral" on the Screen

THE film of Mr. Eliot's play "Murder in the Cathedral" was treated in a perfunctory manner by the regular film critics; they were polite but not enthusiastic. They must have found its pace snail-slow, and have been worried by the confinement of the roving camera within the bounds of the cathedral and the frequent holding up of the action by the long choral interludes. But what is extraordinary is that they seemed to ignore the fact that, whatever its merits or demerits as a film, here was a major event in the world of the arts, the first attempt to adapt a modern verse play to the screen. This experiment was bound to present some very pretty problems. Mr. Eliot himself seems to think they have been solved. In his programme notes he shows his pleasure at finding that his words lost nothing in the screen presentation (this was indeed a surprise and delight), and believes that the

Director has found the way to let the visual element "support the words without distracting attention from them". That is a very hopeful view, and one not shared by many of us; but a beginning has been made to join poetry to pictures. It is exciting to speculate about the future of the union, even though this first example of it was in some ways pedestrian and disappointing.

The ordinary film-goer seems to have found the film most successful in the first scene, the one that formed no part of the original play, but was written *ad hoc*. Certainly there was good drama in the clash between the scowling king and the resolute Archbishop, and excellent film technique in the way in which the camera led our eyes up and down that long line of peers, peers temporal and peers spiritual, peers truculent and peers wavering. (What a set of faces!) It was interesting to see Mr. Eliot using the new medium so skilfully. The episodes from the original play that lost least by the medium were those of the four knights. These well-meaning thugs came off almost better on the screen than the stage. The Art Director had the brave notion of putting them into those horrible helmets with long iron nose-pieces that partly mask and completely de-humanize the face; then he used the powerful device of the close-up to show their fierce stupid faces at close quarters. A very different scene came off well too, that of Becket's Christmas sermon. Here again the close-up was a help. We saw every movement of Father Groser's face and heard every inflection of his voice. It was like having a front seat at St. Paul's. If we let our attention wander (as sometimes happens to the best people in sermon time) it was kept in touch with the theme by the sight of a charming mural of the Nativity with the Virgin floating in mid-air, or of the attentive faces of the congregation. (In a chorus that came not long after this scene a humble interior showed a man working in his barn while his wife rocked the cradle and the ass looked over the partition, and in a flash we were reminded of the fresco of the Holy Family, though

there was nothing in the words to suggest the comparison. Sensitive touches like this, possible only in a film, show what can be done when a Director has absorbed into his inner mind the whole of a poet's play and is giving a visual representation of something beyond the content of each several speech. But such moments were few.) Another good trick of the film (though it was over-used) was to let the camera take us on conducted tours round the cathedral, from sight to sight of carvings in wood and stone, of crucifix and corbel, gargoyle and saint. For a time this was a pleasant entertainment, but long before the end the cathedral as a visual stimulant had been exhausted. We had a strong desire to get "out of God's benediction into a warm sun". Like the Archbishop we felt "cabined in Canterbury". I can stay in church as long as the next man, on a good occasion, but after an hour or so I began to feel-stone-bound, and the sight of four men galloping over the downs was a sheer physical relief; so was that of the winter sea washing the feet of the chalk cliff. We were allowed too few such holidays.

Here we come to the crux of the matter. The power of a poetic drama lies in its sound; that of a film in its sight. How are these two to be reconciled? The director is here dealing not with an ordinary script (libretto, scenario, or whatever the text of a film is called) but with a play whose every word must be heard and noted. How can he use the visual resources of the cinema to attract a wide audience to such a play without distracting us from the real object of our attention? The thing bristles with difficulties. These are seen clearly in the episode of the four Tempters, and most of all in the Chorus.

In the scene of the Tempters Mr. Eliot is using the method of the medieval Morality play; he is giving bodily form and voice to elements in the mind and soul of Man. Each of these four embodiments of evil desire holds an argument with Becket which is closely reasoned. It is essential for us to follow every word of this verbal attack

and defence. While this is happening what are our eyes to see? The Director uses some ingenuity here. During the first of the four dialogues he shows us the Tempter engaging Becket in a game of chess. This is a pretty piece of symbolism; chess is a battle, and at the very moment when Becket routs his foe on the spiritual field he checkmates him on the board. But this presentation has its danger. We may become fascinated by the sight of the jewelled archepiscopal glove moving the carved pieces on the board, and forget to listen. This may not matter much for people who have the play almost by heart but it does to newcomers. The Second and Third Tempters were dull dogs and there was nothing of particular interest in the production here; but when we reached the powerful Fourth Tempter (the voice of Becket's own spiritual pride, the devil in the breast), we came upon a strange paradox; the film succeeded at this point by abdicating as a film! It abandoned all attempt to give bodily form to the Tempter. We heard his voice, looked up, and saw—Nobody! His words were spoken (by Mr. Eliot himself) in a dry sardonic voice heavy with menace, but form he had none. So that at this dramatic crisis the Director fell back on the technique not even of the stage but of radio, where our eyes play no part and we become all ears! It is a little ironic that this should have been the most powerful episode in the film.

In one respect this scene seemed to miss an obvious chance; it made no attempt, by change of lighting or dress, to give these four ghostly visitants a supernatural air, so that a good many of the audience took the first three Tempters for ordinary flesh-and-blood knights paying a call on their Archbishop. (But perhaps a new and subtle point was being made here, namely that satanic visitors may use the forms of our familiar companions when they come to work us woe?)

The element in the play that was by far the most difficult for the medium of the cinema was the Chorus. The treatment of these long lyrical interludes was the Director's big

chance, and I thought he missed it. The women of the chorus are not actors in the ordinary sense; they cannot change the course of events; their speeches are usually addressed to nobody; they are not dialogue but meditation or emotional outburst. We do not think of them as individuals but as a group of unnamed people, representative of the mass of us, leaders of humdrum lives, who are suddenly caught up in heroic events and made to witness a tragedy that they cannot avert. What they *say* in those long impressive verse choruses is of immense importance to the atmosphere of the play, also to the author's working out of the relation between us common folk and the saints (for whose fates we are inescapably responsible in some measure). But they themselves as individuals matter little to us; they must be heard but need hardly be seen. So it was a disappointment and a weariness to find them always before our eyes. They entered the cathedral, lit their candles, prayed, left the cathedral, re-entered, lit more candles, prayed again . . . on and on like figures in some recurrent dream. Still worse, they were not always shown at a distance but often in close-up, their lips monstrously enlarged, carefully mouthing their lines, so that our attention was drawn to them and not to what they were saying. Now for some reason it is embarrassing to *hear* a female chorus—though not a male one—speaking their lines beautifully in unison; it is worse to *see* them, and to see them individually, greatly enlarged, is worst of all. During the terrific choruses which speak of the defilement of the world by sin, and of man's urgent longing for purification, and in those "surrealist" choruses that call up horrific images of evil from the bottom of the human mind and describe the Nothingness beyond Death that sickens the soul with fear, what did the camera provide for us to look at? Sights commensurate with the powerful verse? No; still the lips of the same ladies, carefully reciting. Here was a lack of enterprise. In the far-off days of the early Russian films I remember brave attempts to convey the impact of mighty

national and spiritual convulsions by pictures that touched the imagination, but those pictures were *symbolic*, not realistic. That was what we missed here. It is only fair to say that not all the choruses kept us tied to the faces of the women of Canterbury. There were welcome occasions on which we saw not the speakers but what they spoke of, their homes and work, the sea that was to bring back the Archbishop from France, the bitter, unproductive winter earth.

What about Father Groser as Becket? It was brave to plump for a priest for the hero instead of an actor. The reviews said he underplayed the part, that it was hardly *acted* at all. That is true enough. All the same it had some advantages. It was a pleasure to watch and hear him all that time. He gave the feeling of a man who towered above the rest in spiritual stature. This kept the film on a high plane, but it put the drama out of joint. This Becket lacked arrogance; there was nothing peremptory in his shouted command: "Open the door!" If he had ever been in danger of spiritual pride or the terrible temptation "to do the right deed for the wrong reason", which seemed unlikely, he had overcome these desires long ago. I missed Father Groser's usual force and humour. His respect for the play seemed to be subduing his natural spirits and he was only his full self in the sermon. Probably he was glad to stop pontificating and get back to his proper job of parish priest.

I had a feeling that not only Becket but the Director himself was labouring under so deep a respect for the play and its author that he was timid and literal in his presentation. The text is sacrosanct, I agree, but if verse drama is to be translated into the idiom of the screen the Director must take his courage in both hands and plunge in, using his medium to the full. Why should he not follow the example of the ballet and draw on the best living artists? Picasso and Derain don't disdain to produce décors for the ballet. Why not call in a Henry Moore or Graham Sutherland when making a film? If this is to be a true wedding of poetry

and picture the two must weigh equal. This time the poetry had it all its own way.

Still, we are glad that the experiment has been made. It leaves a spate of questions in the mind. Will other poets try their hand? Will Mr. Eliot write a play specifically for the cinema? If so, how will its verse differ from the many kinds he has already used in his stage plays? What type of picture can best support without supplanting the poetry? We are used to "background" music—Vaughan Williams and William Walton have not thought it a waste of time to write for films—can we in the same way accept the idea of "background" pictures? It is hard for sight to play second fiddle to sound; she is usually top dog, and until now it has been assumed that sight must always come first in the cinema.

The audience at the Academy Cinema was hardly a representative one; there were nuns and school parties and artists and parsons in plenty, who knew their Eliot. But it is what the ordinary cinema-goer thought of it that matters most. By all accounts he found it like an immense church service, uplifting though mighty tiring. But if my three neighbours were fairly representative we need not give up hope. One said, "Let's go to 'A Streetcar named Desire' after all this"; the second went painlessly to sleep; but the third turned to his wife with "That's an uncomfortable sort of film; it raises some awkward questions". So the guilt and fear that worked like worms "in the guts of the women of Canterbury" had begun to work like yeast in the breast of a man in Oxford Street.

LEILA DAVIES.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CULTURE, RECREATION, AND SERVICE

DEAR SIRs,

May I steal a few minutes between my after-dinner washing-up and my afternoon visiting to back Mrs. Shilton against Mr. R. W. L. Wiseman? I work singlehanded in a large town parish, and my wife works singlehanded in a large town vicarage. She has three children and just manages with eight hours weekly help (all we can afford!) and help from me and our domestic tools. Each hour saved by "mechanical time-savers" means one extra hour spent by myself or her in the study or the parish or in culture, recreation, service—or rest! How we long for an evening when I am in early enough, and my wife is not too tired, for her to play the piano to me! How we miss the mutual entertainment of neighbouring parsons and other personal friends that was possible in the more prosperous and leisured age in which Mr. Wiseman still lives!

Of course the leisure gained by domestic machinery can be misused (though there is a "contact" value in mass produced amusements which is too often forgotten by theorists). But for us, who have grown out of the age of the "servant culture" that finished in 1939, it is the radio, the vacuum cleaner, the washing machine, the continuous burning water-heater and the motor-cycle, that save us from the frustrations of slavery.

GEORGE JAGER.

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